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Democrats' Biggest Fear: Parental Involvement

Sometimes you have to read between the lines. Democrats say they oppose the Republican-sponsored education reform bill because it "writes a blank check" to the states and requires no accountability. That's flat wrong, but it's a cover for what they really oppose — even fear — and that is an overhaul of the education establishment that lets parents be players. Just take a look at the exchange that occurred on the floor of the Senate today between Senators Patty Murray (D-WA) and Judd Gregg (R-NH) [note this an unofficial transcript]:

MRS. MURRAY: I am just looking at the language of the bill that says . . . that a parent directs that the services be provided through a tutorial assistance provider. *It is not directed by the school, it is directed by the parent. And I think that that is one of the underlying flaws and concerns that we have with this . . .* I do not know how a school district is going to manage this when. . . frankly, the parent is in control. . . .

MR. GREGG: I regret that the Senator . . . doesn't wish to debate this in a forum-like manner . . . The only difference between the present law and what this does . . . is that in this case, the parent gets involved. Under present law, the parent doesn't get involved . . . In other words, . . . the parent has the right to say, yes, please send my child to an assistive learning facility. . . . Essentially what we're proposing here is a system which already exists in Arizona. . . . where parents actually get involved in the process of educating their kids. Where the parents actually have something to say about it. Now, we all know from history and from study after study that the most determinative effect on improving the quality of education is parental involvement. We also know that the single biggest problem we have with low-income children is the fact that parents aren't involved.

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